

# Introduction

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## ABOUT THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

The state accountability system assigns ratings to every campus and district in the Texas public education system each year. In most cases the system assigns one of four rating labels—ranging from lowest to highest—*Academically Unacceptable*, *Academically Acceptable*, *Recognized*, and *Exemplary*. To determine the rating label, the system evaluates indicators of performance, including assessment results on the state standardized assessment instruments as well as longitudinal completion rates and annual dropout rates. Generally, campuses and districts earn ratings by having performance that meets absolute standards or by demonstrating sufficient improvement toward the standard. In addition to evaluating performance for all students, the performance of individual groups of students is held to the rating criteria. The student groups are defined to be the major ethnic groups and the group of students designated as economically disadvantaged. All of the evaluated groups must meet the criteria for a given rating category in order to earn that label.

There are two sets of procedures within the state accountability system; one that evaluates standard campuses and districts and another that evaluates alternative education campuses and charter operators that primarily serve students identified as at risk of dropping out of school. The indicators and criteria differ between the alternative education accountability (AEA) and standard procedures but the overall designs are similar.

The purpose of the state accountability system is first and foremost to improve student performance. The system sets reasonable standards for adequacy and identifies and publicly recognizes high levels of performance and performance improvement. The system provides information about levels of student performance in each school district and on each campus, and it identifies schools and districts with inadequate performance and provides assistance.

## ABOUT THIS MANUAL

The *Accountability Manual* is a technical resource that explains how districts and campuses are evaluated. Part 1 pertains to standard procedures and Part 2 pertains to registered alternative education campuses as well as charter operators evaluated under AEA procedures. Part 3 pertains to areas covered by both standard and AEA procedures. The *Manual* includes the information necessary for determining 2008 ratings and acknowledgments.

As with previous editions, selected chapters are adopted by reference as Commissioner of Education administrative rule. *Appendix A* describes the rule which will be effective in July 2008.

## ADVISORY GROUPS

For the review of the procedures adopted previously and proposed for the future, TEA staff invited the assistance and advice of educators, school board members, business and community representatives, professional organizations, and legislative representatives from across the state. The commissioner considered all proposals and made final decisions which are reflected in this publication.

The annual use of these advisory bodies will continue. With their assistance the system can be modified, indicators improved, standards reevaluated, and other adjustments made. In 2007, the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislature created the Select Committee on Public School Accountability to conduct a comprehensive review of the public school accountability system. As a result of this committee's work, statutory changes may occur during the 2009 legislative session that will alter the system in the future.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Over the years TEA has worked closely with public school personnel and others to develop an integrated accountability system. The standard and AEA procedures of the 2008 system are based upon these guiding principles:

- **STUDENT PERFORMANCE**  
The system is first and foremost designed to improve student performance;
- **RECOGNITION OF DIVERSITY**  
The system is fair and recognizes diversity among campuses and students;
- **SYSTEM STABILITY**  
The system is stable and provides a realistic, practical timeline for measurement, data collection, planning, staff development, and reporting;
- **STATUTORY COMPLIANCE**  
The system is designed to comply with statutory requirements;
- **APPROPRIATE CONSEQUENCES**  
The system sets reasonable standards for adequacy, identifies and publicly recognizes high levels of performance and performance improvement, and identifies campuses with inadequate performance and provides assistance;
- **LOCAL PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY**  
The system allows for flexibility in the design of programs to meet the individual needs of students;
- **LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY**  
The system relies on local school districts to develop and implement local accountability systems that complement the state system; and
- **PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW**  
The system supports the public's right to know levels of student performance in each school district and on each campus.

## **REPORTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM**

*Accountability Data Tables.* Tables showing the performance used for determining accountability ratings are made public at the time of the ratings release, by August 1<sup>st</sup> each year. These tables provide the data necessary to understand a campus or district rating. Samples of these tables are shown in *Chapter 4* (for standard procedures) and *Chapter 12* (for AEA procedures).

*Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS).* The AEIS is a comprehensive reporting system defined in state statute. Since 1990-91, campus and district AEIS reports have been generated

and published annually for all campuses and districts in the state. Local districts share responsibility for disseminating the AEIS reports, including holding hearings for public discussion of the AEIS report content. All indicators used for accountability are reported in the AEIS, with additional disaggregations depicting how each grade level and different populations performed. Indicators that will potentially be used in future accountability ratings are also published in the AEIS when possible. The reports also show participation rates on the state-administered tests. Additionally, the AEIS shows demographic information about students and staff, program information, and financial information, all of which provide context for interpreting accountability results.

*School Report Card (SRC).* Also required by state statute, this agency-generated report provides a subset of the information found on the AEIS report and is produced at the campus level only. Campuses must provide the SRC to each student's family.

*Snapshot: School District Profiles.* This TEA publication provides a state and district-level overview of public education in Texas. Though no longer available as a printed publication, the most current *District Detail* section of *Snapshot*—up to 90 items of information for each public school district—is available on the agency website.

*Pocket Edition.* This brochure provides a quick overview of state-level statistics on performance, demographics, campus and district ratings, personnel, and finances.

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).* AYP is a federal accountability program mandated under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. For information on similarities and differences between the federal and state accountability systems, see *Appendix C – Comparison of State and Federal Systems*.

*Online Reports.* All of the reports cited above are available on the agency website through the Division of Performance Reporting homepage at [www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/index.html](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/index.html).

**Table 1: Definitions of Terms**

Throughout this *Manual*, the terms listed below are defined as shown, unless specifically noted otherwise. See *Chapter 14 – AEA Glossary and Index* for definitions of terms specific to the AEA procedures.

<i>District</i>	This term includes charter operators as well as traditional independent school districts.
<i>Charter Operator</i>	A charter operator is treated like a district in the accountability system. The charter operator is identified with a unique six-digit number as are districts. The campus or campuses administered by a charter are identified with unique nine-digit number(s). The charter operator may administer instruction at one or more campuses.
<i>Superintendent</i>	The educational leader and administrative manager of the district or charter operator. This term includes other titles that may apply to charter operators, such as chief executive officer, president, and chief administrative officer.
<i>Campus</i>	This term includes charter campuses as well as campuses administered by traditional independent school districts.
<i>Standard Campus</i>	A campus evaluated under standard accountability procedures. This includes campuses that serve students in alternative education settings, but that are not registered to be evaluated under the AEA procedures.
<i>Registered Alternative Education Campus (AEC)</i>	A campus registered for evaluation under AEA procedures that also meets the at-risk registration criterion. This term includes AECs of Choice as well as Residential Facilities.
<i>TAKS Test Results</i>	This phrase refers to TAKS assessments including the TAKS (Accommodated) assessments that are part of the accountability calculations for 2008. See <i>Table 3 in Chapter 2</i> .
<i>Data Integrity</i>	Data integrity refers to the quality of the data used to determine an accountability rating. The integrity of data can be compromised either through purposeful manipulation or through unintentional errors made through the data reporting process. In either case, if data integrity is in question, it may not be possible to determine a reliable rating.
<i>Measures, Hurdles, Analysis Groups</i>	Under standard accountability procedures, a campus or district can be evaluated on as many as 35 measures (five for each of the five TAKS subjects, plus five each for the dropout and completion rates.) The five for each indicator are All Students and the four student groups: African American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged. The measures that are evaluated for a campus or district are sometimes referred to as hurdles. Hurdles refers to the measures that meet minimum size criteria. These are identified on the data tables as Analysis Groups, and have an “X” next to each. Note that, to be eligible for the Exceptions Provision, only the number of TAKS measures count, and only that number is shown on the data table.